



Open Box Pilot Project at M+ Research Centre (Photo: Melody Yiu)

MEDIUMS OF SPATIAL REPRESENTATION

INSTRUCTOR
YIU, Melody MelodyHLYiu@cuhk.edu.hk

ISSUE

At a time of instant generative images, the making of architectural representation is ever faster and easier, but at risk of becoming standardized and homogenous. What are the intrinsic qualities embedded in different media – line drawings, collages, photographs, and prints – and how do they represent architectural ideas? Through the study of representational material made by architects, both formal presentation and work-in-progress sketches, we can learn about not only their design concepts but also the architectural responses to the issues and concerns at the time such images were produced. This course will study various types of architectural representation of the late 20th century to reflect upon contemporary means of how we read and make architecture. In particular, we will actively engage with archival material produced by the avant-garde architecture collective, Archigram, as the primary source to dissect the techniques of making and to discuss the ideas that they represent.

DESCRIPTION

This course explores the medium of architectural representations in the late 20th century, including technical drawings, mixed-media collages, and photographic reproduction, and the development of screen-based digital media that follows. It will involve both the study of history and theories through lectures and seminar discussion, as well as creative engagement with architectural archives to read and interpret the material.

Students will first be introduced to architectural representation types and their relationship with progressive architectural ideas in the 1960s-80s, with reference to contemporary architects influenced by these precedents. The explorative analysis will dissect the content/concept and medium/materiality of paper-based architectural representations and their implications in relation to social context and new technologies. Besides the in-class discussions and seminars, this course will include three archive viewing sessions at the M+ Research Centre, working alongside the archivist to examine the M+ Archigram Archive Collection.

The course is designed to stimulate both critical thinking and creativity through in-class and field activities, towards a design / curatorial project on the topic of medium, representation, and interpretation. Students will gain knowledge about the architectural representation techniques and the social context of their production, as well as exposure to the real-life practice of handling materials at the architectural archive.

IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

This course provides an opportunity for students to “re-learn” the skills and techniques of architectural representations, and their social-cultural significance beyond image-making. This will benefit students in their own design project with a deeper understanding of the meaning and implications embedded in different media. The current technological turn in generative image and 3D printing is changing our way of seeing and making architecture, just as mid-century architects anticipated new modes of representation in lithography and film. Understanding of how methods evolve informs and inspires us for design in/for the future, building up the case for cultural sustainability through the understanding and dissemination of built environment heritage.

COURSE SYLLABUS

TOPIC 1: READING ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS / THE MEDIUM

The first topic will introduce the different media of architectural representation since the 1960s, including ink drawings, collage, photography, and printed media. This will serve as the basis of the following seminars, viewing sessions, and creative exploration, understanding the ways in which architects convey their ideas and concepts, and how do it react to the impact of social/technological changes in the postwar society.

TOPIC 2: ENGAGING WITH ARCHIVAL MATERIAL

Following the discussion about the medium of architectural representation, the second topic will focus on working with the physical archival materials of the Archigram Collection at the M+ Research Centre. With an introduction by the archivist about their work and the collection, students will have a basic understanding of how to handle and read architectural archival materials systematically. It will involve active engagement in 4 viewing sessions, building upon a group project that will interpret a particular piece of artifact, focusing on a specific medium.

TOPIC 3: CREATE & CURATE ARCHITECTURAL REPRESENTATIONS

The content of the group project will become the basis of an exhibition about the medium of architectural representation, co-curated by the class. It will not only be a reproduction of archival material, but the team will also be the creative producers who make new material in complement with the viewed archival material.

METHODS

This course follows a seminar-workshop format, covering key topics and issues outlined in the course syllabus through lectures, seminar discussions, and hands-on workshops. The three key lectures will provide students with the foundational knowledge on the subject, complemented with in-class discussions for peer learning. The core project will be the first-hand engagement with architectural drawings and other materials at the M+ Research Centre, where students will gain experience in handling archival material and develop a critical interpretation of the collection. To support students during the design-research process, there will be regular tutorials in small groups during the course. The final outcome of the course will be presented in a student-curated exhibition of the archival research process, with the invitation of arts and architecture archivists to offer their insight into architectural archives, representation, and curation.

Students are required to actively participate in the seminar discussions and viewing sessions, documented in an individual graphical journal to be submitted at the end of the course. The group work will investigate a particular set of archival material, guided by tutorial sessions and presented in form of exhibition panels and a collective booklet. A basic template will be provided for the documentation and term-end exhibition to ensure a consistent and organized presentation. A detailed list of deliverables will be provided to students when each task is assigned.

DELIVERABLES

1. **Graphic Journal** (on-going): Each student will keep a graphic journal to document their learning and observation in response to the lectures, seminars, and archive viewing sessions.
2. **Group Presentation** (week 10): The group of 3 students will collectively present their initial findings from the viewing sessions, in preparation for the class exhibition.
3. **Class exhibition and Booklet** (due week 14): A student-curated class exhibition at the end of the term, with ideas and content discussed and developed during the course and online tutorial sessions. A documentation book of the viewing session will be produced and presented on the occasion of the class exhibition, with each group contributing one section.
4. **Individual Reflection** (due week 14): A 500-word reflection will be due at the end of the course, answering specific questions in response to the course material and workshop experience.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

ABILITY

1. Analyse the techniques and methods of different architectural media
2. Relate technology in architectural medium production with various artefacts
3. Describe the details and methods of the archival material examined
4. Present key ideas about the design intention and context of the material examined
5. Work cooperatively with others in a team setting

UNDERSTANDING / KNOWLEDGE

1. Understand the historical background and social context in which different artefacts are produced
2. Develop a comprehensive knowledge of the late 20th-century architectural medium and representation
3. Acquaintance with the practice of architectural archive handling

ASSESSMENT SCHEME

SPECIFIC ASSESSMENT

1. Participation and Seminar Discussions (15%) | on-going
2. Individual Graphic Journal (15%) | due date: week 4, week 9, and week 12
3. Group Presentation + PPT submission (30%) | due date: week 10
4. Class exhibition panels + Booklet submission (40%) | due date: week 14
5. Individual Reflection (10%) | due date: week 14

Total: 100%

Each assessment result will be released to students upon completion accompanied by written comments based on student progress and performance.

COURSE FORMAT

Teaching Days

1. Students must attend in person according to the teaching schedule.
Teaching Day: Wednesday, 2:30 pm – 5:15 pm
Teaching Venue: YIA501 & M+ Research Centre
2. Online tutorials and other learning activities may be scheduled outside of teaching days.

Student Study Effort_3 credit course (Total: 140 hrs)

1. Class Contact: 39 hrs (Lecture, Tutorial, Critique, Field Trip)
2. Other Student Study Effort: 100 hrs (Coursework and reading exercise)

REQUIRED READINGS

Buckley, Craig. *Graphic Assembly : Montage, Media, and Experimental Architecture in the 1960s*. University of Minnesota Press, 2019.

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. Penguin Books, 1985. <https://www.ways-of-seeing.com/>

McLuhan, Marshall, et al. *The Medium Is the Massage*. Simon & Schuster, 1989.

OTHER REFERENCES & RESOURCES

Yaneva, Albena. *Crafting History : Archiving and the Quest for Architectural Legacy*. Cornell University Press, 2020.

Collins, George Roseborough, et al. *Visionary Drawings of Architecture and Planning : 20th Century through the 1960s* : Developed for Travel and Circulated by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES). MIT Press, 1979.

Dorrian, Mark, and Paul Emmons (editors). *Drawing Matter Journal 2 – Drawing Instruments: Instrumental Drawings*. Drawing Matter Trust, 2024. https://issuu.com/drawing.matter/docs/dmj_no2

Hays, K. Michael. "Architecture's Appearance and The Practices of Imagination." *Log*, no. 37, 2016, pp. 204–13. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26324734>
<https://www.mplus.org.hk/en/collection/makers/archigram/>

IMPORTANT NOTE TO STUDENTS

Expectations for Professional Conduct

The motto of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) is “Through learning and temperance to virtue”. This motto places equal emphasis on the intellectual and moral education of students. In addition to pursuing academic excellence, students of CUHK are expected to maintain and uphold the highest standard of integrity and honesty in their academic and personal lives, respect the rights of others and abide by the law. More information on undergraduate studies can be found in the UG Student Handbook. https://rgsntl.rgs.cuhk.edu.hk/aqs_prd_aplx/Public/Handbook/

Attendance

Class attendance is required in all courses. For an excused absence, the instructor must be notified and presented with documentation of illness or personal matters. Please note: **Three (3)** or more unexcused absences may result in a failing grade for the course.

Academic Honesty

The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on honesty in academic work submitted by students and adopts a policy of zero tolerance on academic dishonesty

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at: <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>.

With each assignment, students may be required to submit a statement that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

Third-Party Assistance

All intellectual work essential to the design project must be completed by the student and cannot, under any circumstance, be outsourced to a third party (including, but not limited to a company, consultant, alumni, and/or friend).

In the design studio context, students may utilize external resources, such as printing services for presentation materials, and/or laser cutting and 3D printing services for prototyping purposes. Use of such third-party services constitutes non-intellectual work done by others. It is only permitted with prior written consent from the studio tutor and acknowledgment of such work done by the third party.

Assistance from other students or friends for aspects of project production also constitutes non-intellectual work done by others; this is allowed only if declared and acknowledged in a written statement attached to any such work that has received assistance.

Under all circumstances, students must declare all work done by others by completing the school's designated form before assessment. This form must include a detailed explanation of the third party's identity (name and relationship to the student), when and how they were utilized, and the specific tasks they performed in the project. The completed form, signed by the student, must be endorsed by the tutor and presented during the final review. The school will collect and retain this form for record-keeping purposes.

Failure to follow this code of conduct may be considered a case of academic dishonesty, to be reviewed by a disciplinary board, and possible failure of the course.

Artificial Intelligence

Students are allowed to use AI tools in assisting with research activities and to produce generative images for presentation, with explicit acknowledgment. AI tools are encouraged to be used with caution: (1) for research tasks, AI responses need to be verified with multiple sources, and (2) substantial generative images need to be presented with footnotes on input, prompts, and output. The interaction with AI tools should be documented in detail in the Graphic Journal, and a summary in the Individual reflection.

Students may refer to Approach 3 of the CUHK 'Use of Artificial Intelligence tools in Teaching, Learning and Assessments' – A Guide for Students.

Student Work

Submission of coursework and documentation must be complete and correctly formatted. Missing or incomplete submission of the documentation folder will result in the grade for the course being withheld. This will prevent registration for the following term or delay graduation.

External Examination

Of paramount importance to the academic rigour and professional relevance of the architecture programme, the external examination process serves as a critical and impartial review mechanism. An invited panel of distinguished practitioners, academics, and industry experts convenes to rigorously evaluate the school's pedagogical ecosystem. This comprehensive audit scrutinises the fairness and consistency of the internal assessment process, benchmarks the standard and ambition of student work against national and international norms, and provides invaluable feedback on the intellectual and pedagogical direction of the curriculum itself.

As a cornerstone of this process and a mandatory graduating requirement, final-year students from both the Bachelor of Social Sciences (Architecture) and Master of Architecture programmes must present their final project and portfolio work in person. This formal defence before the external panel not only validates the authenticity and depth of their learning but also simulates a professional practice environment, demanding they articulate their design rationale, critical thinking, and technical resolution to an authoritative audience, thereby preparing them for the collaborative and discursive nature of the architectural profession.

Term 1: 3 September 2025 – 3 December 2025

WEEK 01		
03.09	OPENBOX SHOWCASE	Course Introduction and Seminar
WEEK 02		
10.09	REPRESENTATION	Lecture #1 and Workshop
WEEK 03		
17.09	ARCHIVES	M+ Research Centre Visit / Ways of Seeing exercise
WEEK 04		
24.09	INTEPRETATION	Lecture #2 / Group Project Introduction
WEEK 05		
01.10	NATIONAL HOLIDAY	NO CLASS
WEEK 06		
08.10	VIEWING SESSION #1	M+ Research Centre / Online Tutorial
WEEK 07		
15.10	VIEWING SESSION #2	M+ Research Centre / Online Tutorial
WEEK 08		
22.10	VIEWING SESSION #3	M+ Research Centre / Online Tutorial
WEEK 09		
29.10	CHUNG YEUNG FESTIVAL	NO CLASS
WEEK 10		
05.11	PIN-UP	Group Work Preliminary Review
WEEK 11		
12.11	CREATION	Lecture #3 / Class exhibition Introduction
WEEK 12		
19.11	WORK SESSION	Individual Tutorial / Work Session
WEEK 13		
26.11	NO CLASS	REVIEW WEEK
WEEK 14		
03.12	EXHIBIT	Student-curated exhibition (TBC) / Individual reflection

Grade	Descriptor	Criteria	Points
A	Excellent	Comprehensively excellent performance on all aspects of concept understanding, activity engagement, cohesion in output and presentation. Achieving all learning outcomes with distinction.	4.0
A-	Very Good	Generally outstanding performance on concept understanding, activity engagement, cohesion in output and presentation. Achieving all learning outcomes with merit.	3.7
B+	Good	Substantial performance on concept understanding, activity engagement, cohesion in output and presentation. Achieving all learning outcomes satisfactorily.	3.3
B			3.0
B-			2.7
C+	Fair	Fair performance on the concept understanding, activity engagement, cohesion in output and presentation. Achieving all learning outcomes at a passing standard.	2.3
C			2.0
C-			1.7
D+	Pass	Barely satisfactory performance on concept understanding, activity engagement, cohesion in output and presentation. Achieving all learning outcomes at a barely satisfactory standard.	1.3
D			1.0
F	Failure	Unsatisfactory performance on concept understanding, activity engagement, cohesion in output and presentation. Not achieving all learning outcomes.	0.0

Written Feedback to Students

Term: _____

Grade: _____

Course Code: _____

Review: _____

Tutor: _____

Student Name: _____

Student ID: _____

Feedback from Course Instructor:

Achievements:

Challenges: